

IOWA PRIMATE LEARNING SANCTUARY

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PRIMATE SANCTUARY (IPLS) INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE RELEASES FINDINGS

Dr. Sue Savage-Rumbaugh reinstated as the Resident Scientist

Des Moines, IA...The Iowa Primate Learning Sanctuary (IPLS) reinstated Dr. Savage Rumbaugh to her role as Resident Scientist following an extensive internal investigation regarding allegations about the treatment of the center's bonobos. In summary, the committee discovered that the bonobos are well cared for and was unable to substantiate the allegations against Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh, in part because they encountered significant counterevidence against the claims. The report on the nearly two-month long investigation was reviewed by the board last week.

In September, 2012, the IPLS board of directors received a letter from twelve former employees, some of whom were bonobo caretakers, expressing concerns about the safety and welfare of the bonobos and Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh's fitness to work in the laboratory. The board took these allegations very seriously and responded promptly by immediately placing Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh on administrative leave, bringing in operational oversight by the center's veterinarian, Dr. Julie Gilmore, and by appointing a committee to launch an exhaustive six-week investigation that generated several hundred emails, several hundred printed pages of documents related to the report, and two full days of audio/video interviews.

The scope of the investigation was limited to a January to October 2012 timeframe, as Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh did not assume directorship of the laboratory until that time and because most of the allegations repeated those that were previously investigated by a subcommittee in December 2011, and were found to be baseless and unsubstantiated. Only two of the twelve complainants ever worked under the direct supervision of Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh.

All signatories on the complaint were invited to submit written, video, and/or audio documentation of specific incidents observed firsthand. Most chose to provide information related to the 2011 review,

but two employees who worked throughout 2012 provided information about the laboratory under the oversight of Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh. The committee found that for ten of the twelve complainants, many reported events were hearsay. Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh has denied the allegations categorically.

Current employees, volunteers, students and scientists were also interviewed to help assess the quality of care and research. Many of these individuals provided direct contradictions to the allegations and attested to Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh's unique and empathetic relationship with the bonobos, and provided firsthand positive accounts relating to the quality of care, level of enrichment and understanding of the research. Without any specific alleged instance of misconduct being verified, and because of the abundance of positive testimony regarding Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh's care and treatment of the bonobos, the committee could find no substance to the allegations.

The investigation committee's report, which recommended that Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh be reinstated to the laboratory, was released to the board on November 1, 2012 and the board reviewed the report and voted to accept its contents at a quarterly meeting on Tuesday, November 13, 2012. In this quarterly meeting, the board, with the full support of Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh, who removed herself as a candidate for the directorship, voted that Dr. Gilmore assume the role of Executive Director to enfold the research in a constant mantle of veterinary guidance and oversight, which takes special cognizance of the unique nature of the IPLS research and its worldwide interest and recognition.

Furthermore, notable primatologist, Dr. Carmen Maté, was voted in as Board Chairperson. Among other rolls, Dr. Maté has served as the research director at the Barcelona Zoo for eight years and was also executive director of the Barcelona Zoo from 2004-2008. Dr. Ken Schweller, previous Board Chairperson, remains a member of the IPLS board of directors. The IPLS Board is composed of fifteen voting members, who are primarily PhD academicians with diverse backgrounds, but also includes a veterinarian and individuals with business experience. Three of the four investigative committee members also serve on the board of directors. The committee was headed by a PhD with extensive administrative experience, while the other three members consisted of a veterinarian, an academician and a local business leader.

IPLS remains focused on its goal of opening its doors to the public. On Tuesday, November 13, 2012, the center passed a voluntary USDA inspection, in which no non-compliant items were identified. The center has met all requirements necessary to receive its USDA Class C exhibitor's license. More

information about public accessibility and visitation will be released as soon as IPLS receives its license in the near future.

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